

# **REPORT TO PARISH COUNCILS JULY 2022 FROM CLLR DAVID BARTHOLOMEW**

## **GENERAL OCC REPORT**

The Conservative Opposition remains concerned that the ruling LibDem/Green/Labour administration continues with its Oxford-centric focus and is pursuing ideological ambitions beyond the remit of the council – and at unknown cost.

### **STARTLING £12,000 SPENT ON REPAIRS TO OXFORD LTNS IN JUST A MONTH**

A startling £12,000 has been spent by OCC on repairs to bollards and planters in the new East Oxford Low Traffic Neighbourhood (LTN) scheme in its first month of installation. There have been reports of repeated vandalism of planters, and bollards have been knocked down or pulled out of the ground by opponents of the scheme who feel they have been ignored. OCC has pledged to keep replacing them. Residents in Oxfordshire's towns and villages may wonder why such freely available money is not spent on rural roads where it is needed, rather than imposing a scheme unwanted by many city residents.

### **AMBITION TO ELIMINATE ALL ROAD DEATHS AND SERIOUS INJURIES BY 2050**

A commitment to Vision Zero – the elimination of deaths and serious injuries from road traffic collisions in Oxfordshire – has been agreed by OCC's Cabinet. The council has set interim targets of a 25 per cent cut in casualties by 2026 and a 50 per cent reduction by 2030 before aiming to reach zero by 2050. Although a laudable ambition, the Conservative Opposition is questioning whether such a target is achievable and what the associated costs are going to be.

### **OCC LEADER PLEDGES TO MEET AIR POLLUTION TARGETS AHEAD OF GOVERNMENT**

OCC Leader Cllr Liz Leffman has signed a letter to the UK Environment Secretary George Eustice pledging to meet World Health Organisation (WHO) targets on deadly air pollution 10 years ahead of [the Government's 2040 deadline](#). Another laudable ambition, but many will question whether the council is working beyond its remit and is attempting to reach another impossible goal at unknown cost.

### **OCC TO SEEK INSIGHTS TO GUIDE ITS POLICIES ON TRANSGENDER SUPPORT**

OCC is to consult local people to gather insight to guide future policies to support transgender residents. The engagement work follows a [motion agreed](#) at a Full Council on 5 April. The resulting action plan would be implemented over the coming years. This approach was agreed by Cabinet at its meeting on 21 June. OCC is proposing to set up focused engagement with residents, utilising methods such as Lived Experience conversations, youth forums and the annual residents' survey, to gather insight that will support the development and delivery of new policies. The council also plans to commission research led by Healthwatch Oxfordshire to engage transgender residents and capture their experiences. Cabinet has approved a review of bathroom facilities in council buildings. The Conservative Opposition supports equality for all residents but has concerns about the amount of resource being devoted to these matters which affect less than 1% of the population, given that the council already has robust equality policies.

### **RAINBOW STEPS**

Complaints were received after steps to the part of County Hall that is a listed building were painted in rainbow colours by OCC to support gay pride. Officers confirmed washable paint or chalk had been used and no damage had been done.

## **POLICE WILL NOT ENFORCE 20MPH SPEED LIMITS**

Thames Valley Police has re-stated its stance on 20mph limits. The following objection was recorded in [a recent OCC officer report](#):

*“The current speed of traffic is a reliable indicator of how acceptable a new speed limit would be. If the mean speed is over the proposed limit it is unlikely to be effective without other measures such as engineering or continual enforcement. There is a proven link between road environment/character and drivers speed. Drivers must respect the need for a speed limit. If it is not accepted as realistic it will quickly be abused and be the source of constant demands for police action. The police stance still reflects that 20mph limits and zones should still be self-enforcing. The policy of Thames Valley Police is to use sound practical and realistic criteria (Circular Roads 1/2013) when responding to Highway Authorities in an effort to promote consistency and to reduce the burden of constant and unnecessary enforcement.”*

In a [separate report](#), the police noted:

*“If a speed limit is set too low and is ignored then this could result in the vulnerable road user being less safe and cause the majority of drivers to criminalise themselves and could bring the system of speed limits into disrepute. There should be no expectation that the police would be able to provide regular enforcement if a speed limit is set too low as this could result in an unreasonable additional demand on police resources. It is also important to set reasonable speed limits to ensure consistency across the country.”*

Although 20mph speed limits are welcomed by some parish councils, these police statements do call into question the wisdom of OCC’s £8m cosmetic speed-limit sign-changing exercise.

## **ATTENDING COUNCILLOR MEETINGS REMOTELY**

In his weekly update, Stephen Chandler, Interim Chief Executive Officer, has confirmed all non-statutory OCC councillor meetings will continue to be held either virtually or hybrid.

## **ATTEMPT TO REVERSE IMPOSITION OF VEGAN MEALS**

Conservative Councillor Yvonne Constance will ask members at a full meeting of the council in July to reinstate meat and dairy on to the menu and to support local producers. This follows the decision to move to a vegan offer earlier this year and the subsequent controversy surrounding the provenance of the vegan dishes. Cllr Constance will tell colleagues: “Given the privileged position in which this Council finds itself and the potentially damaging effects of its motion dated 14 December, this Council resolves to offer locally produced menus at Council-catered events, including meat, dairy and vegan options, or to make alternative provisions for members, staff and attendees to facilitate personal choice.” Cllr David Bartholomew, who is seconding Cllr Constance’s motion, will say: “We are not opposed to vegan food, but we do want to help our local producers and serve local food rather than flying in mangoes from abroad. And we want there to be a choice. It is not right to impose personal dietary opinions on others. We are happy to be educated about veganism, but people still must be allowed to make their own choice as to what they do or do not want to eat.”